

disciples asked Him, saying, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?' Jesus answered, 'It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him.'"

Although the blind man was a fallen sinner, bore a shared responsibility for the suffering of all mankind, and thus in an ultimate sense brought his suffering on himself; yet his blindness was not an infliction of punishment for his individual sins or for the individual sins of his parents, but was doubtless caused by the curse on mankind resulting from the Fall.

In this case God can be said to have inflicted the blindness, but only in an ultimate, remote sense, as a judicial punishment for his involvement in original sin. However, God also purposed to deliver the man from this terrible result of the curse through the redemptive ministry of His dear Son.

(3) In Luke 13:1-3 we read of some Galileans whom Pilate executed. The account reads: "Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And He answered and said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered this fate? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.'"

Although these people who died were fallen sinners, bore a shared responsibility for original sin, and thus in an ultimate sense brought their suffering on themselves, yet their suffering and death were not an infliction of punishment by God for their individual violations of God's law, but was clearly caused by the action of another human being (Pilate) and was permitted by God.

(4) In Luke 13:4-5 we learn of a number of persons who were killed by a falling tower in the Siloam section of Jerusalem. The account reads: "Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

Although these eighteen persons were fallen sinners, were involved by representation in the Fall, and were therefore ultimately responsible for their suffering and death, yet their death was not an infliction of punishment by God for their individual sins, but was no doubt caused by the curse on creation resulting from the Fall. In this sense God can be said to have inflicted the death, but only in a remote sense, as a judicial punishment for their shared involvement in original sin.

It would thus appear that the distinction between God's infliction of suffering as a judicial punishment for sin (either my involvement in original sin or my personal and individual sins) and God's permission of suffering because of the sinful actions of others (whether of other human beings or Satan) is a valid and scripturally warranted distinction.

With this distinction in hand, let us summarize what we have learned so far about God's role in suffering; and let us do this by asking and answering four questions: